Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare

37 | 2019
Shakespeare désenchaîné

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Electronic version
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/4219
DOI: 10.4000/shakespeare.4219
ISSN: 2271-6424

Publisher
Société Française Shakespeare

Electronic reference
Jennifer A. Low, « Shakespeare in the Artist's Book: Sequence, Series, and Adaptation », *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* [Online], 37 | 2019, Online since 03 January 2019, connection on 19 April 2019. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/4219 ; DOI : 10.4000/shakespeare.4219

Shakespeare in the Artist's Book: Sequence, Series, and Adaptation

Jennifer A. Low

1 While early modern scholars today acknowledge that multiple figures from both Shakespeare's time and subsequent ages collaborated in creating the early modern dramatic texts that we read and perform today, we often work casually with outmoded conceptions of authorship. Few of us follow the model offered by the textual scholar James McLaverty, who considers the effects of typesetting and page layout, or that of Claire M. L. Bourne, who has recently examined the significance of indentation, dashes, and pilcrows in early modern volumes of plays.[1] Most textual work has emphasized editorial choices, not aesthetic ones. Issues such as font, layout, print, paper choice, and binding have been relatively neglected; mistakenly, the medium of the book is regarded as transparent.

2 This disregard may be challenged by consideration of the work of book artists—artists whose work consistently interrogates the book form. In this essay I examine the use of Shakespearean text in artists' books. In these works, the artistic element is as important as the printed word. The person who crafts the artifact as well as the playwright holds responsibility for the work's creation. Fragmentation of the Shakespearean text might make it fair to describe these works as appropriation or *hommage* to Shakespeare rather than adaptation or collaboration, but I think that all four of these terms can legitimately be applied. I focus on Harry Graf Kessler's *Hamlet* (1930), Arne Wolf's *Hamlet II:2* (1991), and the collaborative work *The Bad Quarto* (2015). In these books, text is print—and the means of printing (metal type, woodcuts, and linoleum blocks) become part of the text. The latter two works are artist's books, volumes whose medium is conceived as an art-work—an *original* work of art. The first one should probably be described as a *livre d'artiste* , for reasons that I shall explain.

3 As Stuart Sillars has observed, illustrated editions of Shakespeare's works reveal how "the plays, increasingly seen as the vital embodiment of cultural maturity, are absorbed into changing ways of seeing, and of organising and aestheticising knowledge."[2] The editions by Rowe (1709), Boydell (1802), and Heath (1807) are among the most significant of these.

Many illustrated editions of individual plays have also been created; Arthur Rackham's 1908 edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* may be the most widely known. These mass-market editions were often created by editors or publishers in response to a perceived market—and purchased (just as the editors and publishers hoped) as a sign of status or culture. The volumes were designed by editors, who commissioned artists to create the illustrations, which stand in subordinate relation to the text (as the term "illustration" implies). These mass-market editions are forerunners to the *livre d'artiste*—deluxe editions with elaborate production values, marketed to and purchased by the wealthy. In such editions the illustrators may be artists: many of the great Modernists of the twentieth century contributed art works to *livres d'artistes*. But they did not design the books. Their contribution was mediated by the editor, who made the decisions about the typeface, layout, and binding, as well as the identity of the illustrator, to achieve his own vision of the product. The form of the book was never interrogated and the primacy of the text was evident.

4 An artist's book "interrogates the conceptual or material form of the book as part of its intention, thematic interests, or material form. [...It is] almost always self-conscious about the structure and meaning of the book as a form."[3] Decisions about form are controlled by the artist, who makes the decisions about production: content, materials, and the interaction of the two. Many early artists' books were handmade one-of-a-kind artifacts or printed in very small print runs by artists who had their own presses, but others have been mass-produced with the artist's input. Many artists' books are created by a single individual, but in cases where the author and artist are separate people, the work is generally a collaboration between the two.

5 Johanna Drucker, herself a creator of artists' books, is the primary theorist of this form. In an attempt to clarify an important distinction, she differentiates between the artist's book and the *livre d'artiste*, the latter of which she characterizes in this way:

> The large scale of the type face is surrounded by a veritable swath of blank margin. The images and text often face each other like new acquaintances across the gutter, wondering how they came to be bound together for all eternity in the hushed, mute interior of the ponderous tome.[4]

In the view of the book artist Keith A. Smith, such a design makes the book format "a servant of the text it contains."[5] By contrast, in discussing the artist's book, Smith alludes to the necessity for the book designer to respond to the dictates of the artist: "The book format should not be relegated to a warehouse for words. Just as in a book of pictures, the format can reinforce and even alter what is printed on the page."[6] The artist's book may be a codex (sheets of paper, often bound together at one end by a spine) but it may also be a foldbook, a fan book, a tunnel book, or a "Venetian blind", bound loosely together at two ends. Smith even conceives of a codex consisting of images of transparencies developed with no fixative. Bound as a leather casebound book, the transparencies would blacken as the first viewer turned the pages one by one: "Upon turning each page, the viewer [would] momentarily see the image as it sacrifices itself to protect the remaining pages."[7] Artists' books are more art than book; yet, because of their size, they can generally engage their audience just one person at a time, offering the viewer an intensely personal experience.

6 The artist's book resembles visual poetry in this important attribute: within it, "[f]iguration, spatialization, visualization of the poetic message aim at remotivating the signifier in the analogical relationship. [...] Thus, *literal* activity tends to displace *literary* activity or even in extreme cases to replace it entirely."[8] In other words, typography and

other visual elements render the medium of print a communicative element in itself rather than merely a means of communication.

7 The works I examine here manifest key traits of the artist's book; yet they are no collaboration between artist and author—in fact, these artists make use of a long-dead author who may be the most canonical figure in literature. I choose the expression "make use of" advisedly, because none of these artists choose *Hamlet* to illustrate it. Instead, their purpose is to use *Hamlet*, a supremely literary artifact, to explore the possibilities of their own art: the Shakespeare text functions as a tool for artistic experimentation. When an already acknowledged masterpiece becomes the foundation for new artistic work, the resulting postmodern bricolage has implications for both the literary canon and the art form it represents. Within the artist's book, Shakespearean text plays Fred Astaire to the art form's Ginger Rogers. (I am recalling the well-known *aperçu* about the famous dance couple: "He gives her class and she gives him sex.") For the book artist, the use of Shakespearean text is both tribute and marketing scheme. The object that results is linked with a well-known name, and the work becomes something of an insouciant challenge to canonicity. The Shakespearean text is the Astaire partner in the collaboration—its presence lends legitimacy to the work while suggesting the necessity for reappraisal of the value inherent in Shakespeare usage. Is the Shakespeare brand somewhat demeaned by this usage? Not at all, I would argue: the artist's use of Shakespeare brings new meaning and new vigor to our concept of "Shakespeare." The deadening nature of the canon is revivified by such new usage, which sexes up Shakespeare and demands new consideration of old white men who show off their skill with rhythmic feet. Once we acknowledge that spatial play and materiality are forging the text, the nature of text is redefined. *Hamlet* is the base, or perhaps the basis for the artwork, but Shakespeare's words, while valuable, are merely one element among others. If, as Courtney Lehmann says, "a legacy comprised of remains is nothing less than an invitation to participate in an adaptation process that [...] is always unfinished," these remains may become part of something new.[9] Works like these draw attention to what Maurizio Calbi characterizes as "the fluidity of their own boundaries."[10] In making use of Shakespeare, they become, to a greater or lesser extent, something else.

8 To follow up on the connection between Fred Astaire, William Shakespeare, and the artist's book, I focus in this essay on elements key to the coherence of the artist's book. As with dance and drama, the coherence of the artist's book must derive from some sort of structure, yet, in this experimental form, the artist may choose to use neither the traditional codex form nor traditional forms of textual organization. Printed Matter, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to the appreciation of this art form, characterizes the experience of examining an artist's book as "physically moving through an artwork."[11] Yet the expression "moving through" may be misleading: frequently the artist's book challenges the notion of the book with a structure that frustrates attempts to read unidirectionally from beginning to end. Smith argues that "single pictures amassed are either a *group*, *series*, or a *sequence*." He defines *group* as a list unified by a common denominator of some sort: "*compilation* without structure or constructed movement." A *series*, in his view, is "*linking movement*", a linear progression or succession in which each picture extends the previous one and affects the one after it. Finally, a *sequence* "is constructed by cause and effect. [...] Several pictures react to, or act upon each other, but not necessarily with the adjacent picture, as in a series. [...] A sequence is a geometric progression, a montage."[12] He also asserts that *series* "generally are thematically related

or connected while sequences are based upon disjunctive relationships." In his words, "[a] sequence is structured by allowing one image to follow another by an order of presentation which is not apparently thematic or systematic."[13]

9 Concern with sequencing and correlation looms large in the form of the works I examine. In the 1930 edition of *Hamlet* created by the Cranach Press as a collaboration among the book's designer, illustrator and editor, woodcuts and source material provide secondary narratives that engage in dialogue with the printed text of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. *The Bad Quarto* is still more collaborative. In contrast, Wolf's *Hamlet II:2* is made by a single artist; in this book, the division of each page into three parts recalls the Surrealist game "Exquisite Corpse", a semi-serious activity of artistic collaboration, and the divided pages result in a collaboration between artist and spectator. The artists who created these works challenge the codex's privileging of series. We can see that the forward movement of the series yields to the multivalent pleasures of sequence. White space becomes visual silence that "creates a privileged space for the text and its individual images."[14] The results are new forms of *Hamlet*. With that change in signifier, the signified is transformed as well.

10 While the Cranach Press *Hamlet* is clearly an homage to Shakespeare's work, its structure also challenges assumptions about the transparency of media. Its creators "appropriate[e] the territory of writing for experiment and invention." The interchanging of illustration for source material here "undermines the linguistic aspect of the system of language", as in artists' books.[15] The structure of the volume implicitly privileges the perceptions of the reader/spectator even as it recalls past traditions of text/image relations.

11 The Cranach Press edition of *Hamlet* is a deluxe edition created by the boutique press founded by Harry Graf Kessler. It is about 14 inches tall; its blackletter typeface was designed by Edward Johnston for this edition and is based on fonts used in the fifteenth century.[16] The format combines the qualities of a deluxe edition with those of a scholarly edition: two short inner columns of Shakespeare's text are surrounded by columns of Shakespeare's source material in smaller print, running outside and underneath Shakespeare's text. This design evolved from collaboration between publisher and artist: initially Kessler had hoped that the illustrator, Edward Gordon Craig, would write marginal notes as well as provide woodcuts.[17] As it turned out, however, the margins contain Shakespeare's source material instead: the Amleth episode from Saxo Grammaticus's history of Denmark and one of the tales from Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*, translated in the sixteenth century from a still-earlier Italian source. The text of *Hamlet* is that edited by J. Dover Wilson, based on the second quarto of 1604. (Wilson diverged from many Shakespeare scholars of his time who regarded as definitive a version that combined the second quarto with the *Hamlet* of the First Folio.)

12 Shakespeare played no part in the book's design, of course: the volume is a collaboration by the publisher, Harry Graf Kessler; the editor, J. Dover Wilson; the typeface designer, Edward Johnston; and the illustrator, Edward Gordon Craig. As Sarah Werner has observed, Johnston's typeface strongly contributes to the volume's realization of Kessler's intention to rework the past.[18]

13 To start with, Craig, artist and theater professional, saw Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a dream dreamt by the title character, a vision that Craig attempted to put into practice in a production in Moscow in 1911-1912. In this printed edition, this perception is expressed in Craig's illustration for the frontispiece, which consists of a single word, "HAMLET", with an image directly under the legend: carving through shadowy darkness, white lines

delineate an epicene youth sitting in what appears to be the center of a blossom or among a pile of cushions, eyes downcast, with his knees clutched to his chest. An open folio rests on his knees. Hamlet seems to sit among leaves, drowsing or reading the leaves of a book. The image links reading, dreaming, and theater. It reflects upon the leafy nature of the codex design, characterizing the book form as both organic and artful, its effect the ability to compel dreams in the reader. For the reader, this volume of *Hamlet* offers an experience that is deeply textual, unfolding as the leaves are turned. In the image, readers may see a version of themselves—reading, and dreaming as they read [Figure 1].

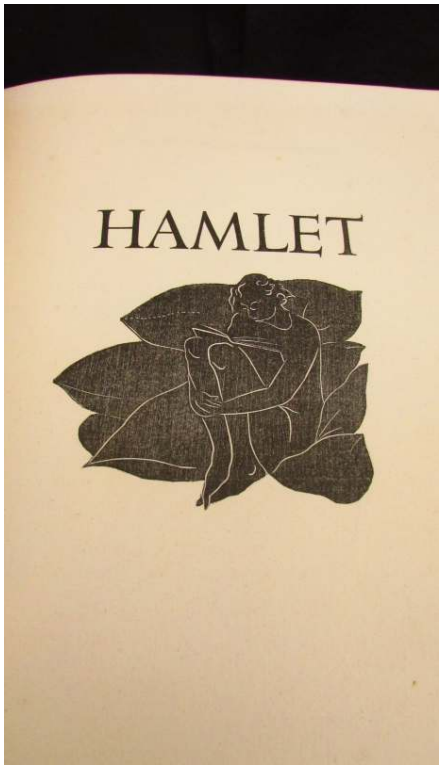


Fig. 1: Frontispiece of the Cranach Press *Hamlet*.

FROM THE JAFFE COLLECTION AT THE JAFFE CENTER FOR BOOK ARTS.
FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES.

14 Kessler's layout of Saxo and Belleforest in relation to Dover Wilson's *Hamlet*, with the source material sharing the page with the play (appearing in smaller print surrounding the drama) and the editorial notes in a separate folder (but in the same typeface) is one of many possible ways of indicating relations among texts. Like concrete poetry, this editorial choice forces the reader to consider the meaning as an arrangement of linguistic and typographic elements simultaneously.[19] Through the smaller type, Kessler characterizes the source-texts as subordinate in importance to Shakespeare's play. They are still indicated, however, as reading matter, unlike the editorial notes, whose presentation characterizes them as a kind of appendix.

15 The volume begins with the text of Saxo Grammaticus printed in Latin on the verso and Oliver Elton's English translation on the recto. Initially a reader might see this design as serving scholarly purposes, but in fact the reason for paralleling the running texts with Shakespeare's is unclear. All versions of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* begin at such a different point in the story from Saxo's material that there is seldom a clear correlation between

contiguous columns. The connection, then, is up to the reader to establish. Readers can flip back and forth to match scenes in Dover Wilson's *Hamlet* with episodes in the source material, or they can treat the narrative on each side as associative or contrasting material. The result in that case is an interplay that establishes connections of difference, similarity, and parallelism on the basis of contiguity. Treated in this manner, the forward motion of the play may be derailed by the reader's diverse and highly personal connections between the source material and the play.

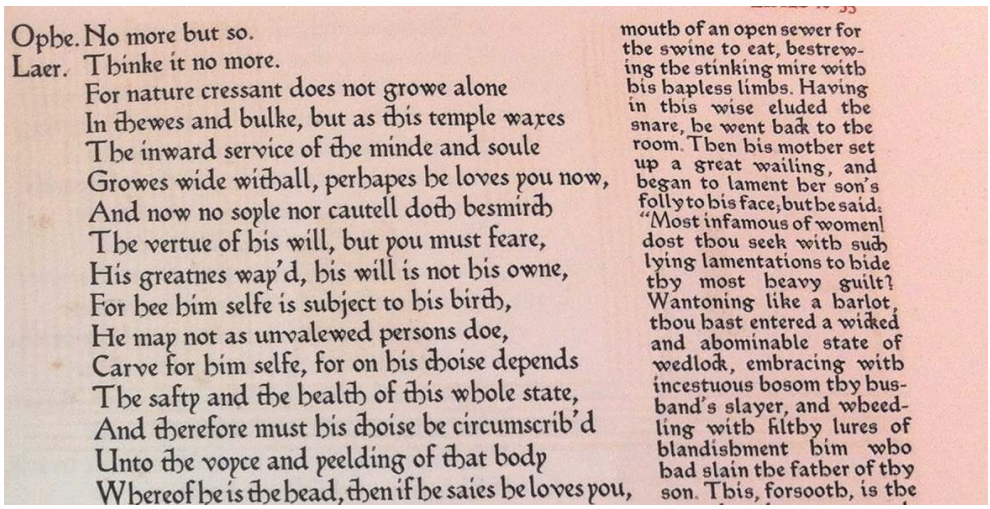
16 On some pages, the two texts reveal parallels as, for example, on page twenty-three, when Amleth's chastisement of his mother appears next to Laertes' advice to Ophelia:

> [P]erhapes he loves you now,
> And now no soyle nor cautell doth besmirch
> The vertue of his will, but you must feare,
> His greatnes way'd, his will is not his owne. (1.3.15-18)[20]

Shakespeare's Laertes appears gentle next to the harshness of Amleth in Saxo Grammaticus:

> *Most infamous of women! Dost thou seek with such lying lamentations to hide thy most heavyguilt? Wantoning like a harlot, thou hast entered a wicked and abominable state of wedlock, embracing with incestuous bosom thy husband's slayer, and wheedling with filthy lures of blandishment him who had slain the father of thy son!*

The Shakespeare scholar's almost instinctual impulse is to compare the words of Saxo's Amleth with Shakespeare's Hamlet, turning to the scene in Act Three, Scene Four. But the layout of the Cranach *Hamlet* draws attention to the parallels between Amleth's words and those of Laertes instead, revealing a recurrent association of virtue with dirt, and indicating assumptions about female chastity that Laertes and Hamlet share. The continuity of masculine perceptions from Saxo to Shakespeare is also evident [Figure 2].


Ophe. No more but so.
Laer. Thinke it no more.
For nature cressant does not growe alone
In thewes and bulke, but as this temple waxes
The inward service of the minde and soule
Growes wide withall, perhapes he loves you now,
And now no soyle nor cautell doth besmirch
The vertue of his will, but you must feare,
His greatnes way'd, his will is not his owne,
For hee him selfe is subject to his birth,
He may not as unvalewed persons doe,
Carve for him selfe, for on his choise depends
The safty and the health of this whole state,
And therefore must his choise be circumscrib'd
Unto the voyce and peelding of that body
Whereof he is the head, then if he saies he loves you,

mouth of an open sewer for the swine to eat, bestrewing the stinking mire with his hapless limbs. Having in this wise eluded the snare, he went back to the room. Then his mother set up a great wailing, and began to lament her son's folly to his face, but he said: "Most infamous of women! dost thou seek with such lying lamentations to hide thy most heavy guilt? Wantoning like a harlot, thou hast entered a wicked and abominable state of wedlock, embracing with incestuous bosom thy husband's slayer, and wheedling with filthy lures of blandishment him who had slain the father of thy son. This, forsooth, is the

Fig. 2: Page 23 (detail) of the Cranach Press *Hamlet*.

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17 On page 52, a contrast rather than a parallel appears. Toward the bottom of Shakespeare's text this dialogue from 2.2. is featured:

> *POLONIUS. Do you know me my Lord?*
> *HAMLET. Excellent well, you are a Fishmonger.*
> *POLONIUS. Not I my Lord.*
> *HAMLET. Then I would you were so honest a man. (2.2.173-176)*

18 Hamlet's mockery of the insensate Polonius characterizes the old man as a seller of fish, a man who is pimping out his own daughter at the command of the lecherous old king. Below Shakespeare's text is a passage from Saxo describing how Amleth's new wife, daughter of the king of England, remains faithful to him even after she learns that he has been unfaithful to her with Queen Hermutrude of Scotland: "[N]o disaster shall put out my flame for thee; no ill-will shall quench it, or prevent me from exposing the malignant designs against thee, or from revealing the snares I have detected." In contrast to the scene in *Hamlet*, in which Ophelia is degraded by her association with her corrupt father, Amleth's new wife, who reveals to her husband that her father is plotting against him, demonstrates her virtue by showing herself "more inclined to love her husband than her father," as Saxo's narrator comments. The seemingly inevitable besmirching of feminine virtue is challenged by this exemplar of a strong woman who nonetheless follows Paul's dictum to join herself to her husband.[21]

19 In some places, connections between dramatic text and source-text are less obvious, and in such cases connections are left to the reader to determine. The role of the reader in creating meaning is reinforced by the juxtaposition, which seems to invite active consideration. I myself perceive a thematic corollary on page fifteen between Hamlet's disdain for the murky connection between truth and external trappings—"I have that within which passes showe / These but the trappings and the suites of woe" (1.2.85-86)—and the passage from Saxo which parallels it, in which Amleth's manipulation of poetic figures to induce his companions to doubt his sanity is recounted: "Again, as he passed along the beach, his companions found the rudder of a ship which had been wrecked, and said they had discovered a huge knife. 'This,' said he, 'was the right thing to carve such a huge ham,' by which he really meant the sea, to whose infinitude, he thought, this enormous rudder matched." The two passages both emphasize figuration, a way of representing abstract ideas through similitude to more concrete objects. A different reader might find an entirely different correspondence on the same page. Connections like these cannot be proved or disproved; their random nature seems to suggest a valid point about the relation between text and source and, indeed, to induce readers to reconceive the relation between the two. But the interplay among primary and secondary material challenges the forward trajectory of the narrative series, creating a sequence of disjunctive relationships that counterbalance the overarching movement toward the conclusion.

20 I turn now to *The Bad Quarto*, an artist's book conceived as a celebration of Shakespeare by the members of the Virginia Arts of the Book Center. This artist's book is a casebound volume created by four teams of artists who worked with the text of *Hamlet* Q1, each team interpreting their portion of the "bad quarto" with relief-printing methods including letterpress, print-making, stamping, and overlays. Each team was assigned two or three eight-page signatures of Q1, selected out of order to avoid the appearance of stylistic division among different sections of the book. For printing, each team received sheets already printed with page numbers and act and scene references. Artists were limited to a color palette of white, transparent white, black, and red (a choice inspired by the red background and white cross of the Danish flag).[22]

21 Recalling Smith's definition that a series is thematically related or connected while sequences are based upon cause and effect relationships, the structure of *The Bad Quarto* is both serial and sequential. The *Quarto*'s pictures are related thematically to the text, but the text itself involves cause and effect. Some of the spreads suggest causation through

the use of a layout that enables the reader to see images as rebuses. For example, the first page of text is all black. White ink stamps imprint two words—"Enter Ghost"—and a large white image of a crown, representing the ghost of Hamlet Senior in pictorial form. The facing (recto) page blocks out the top and bottom in red ink so that the central portion is proportioned like a national flag. Within its parameters, a white cross is layered over a woodcut in Baroque style, picturing a crowd of Netherlandish men on horseback. Across the horizontal band of the white cross is printed, "This bodes some strange eruption to the state." Presumably both the crowd of armed men and the printed comment appear in response to the white crown on the previous page. Omitting the heavy machinery of the guards' dialogue laboriously describing the appearance of the ghost, the bad blood between Norway and Denmark, and the preparation for war, the *Quarto* artists use symbols and pictures to convey the "eruption" that upsets Denmark's political stability [Figure 3].

Fig. 3: Two-page spread from *The Bad Quarto*.

REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION OF VIRGINIA HUMANITIES.

22 Later in the *Quarto*, artists follow Kessler's model of symbolic communication through typeface and implicit contrast. At the junction of 3.3 and 3.4, the artists use a hand-drawn blackletter type with an illuminated letter "A", containing an image of Claudius kneeling in the chapel. Looped about with thorns, the lettering presents Q1 Hamlet's considered thought: "And shall I kill him now / When he is purging of his soule? Making his way for heaven, this is a benefit, / And not REVENGE." The facing page contains a standard page of typeface spelling out the decision of the king's counselor to hide behind the arras to hear the mother and her son, the quarrel between Gertrude and Hamlet, and the young man's impulsive stab at the moving arras. But overlaid upon the grayscale page of text is one word spread vertically down the page, eight letters heavily scored in black, shaped in slash-marks like that formed by a knife carving tree-bark, or through a heavy fabric. The

word is CORAMBIS, the name of the king's counselor in Q1, ornamented (if that's the word) with sprinkles of spots and blots in black and red, representing both ink and blood, as if the page were Hamlet's memorial of his enraged response to the eavesdropper. The spread offers a series, not a sequence: a thematic contrast between the carefully considered decision *not* to kill the king at prayer while the attack on Corambis is unplanned and spontaneous, hardly allowed to impede Hamlet's diatribe against Gertrude at all [Figure 4].

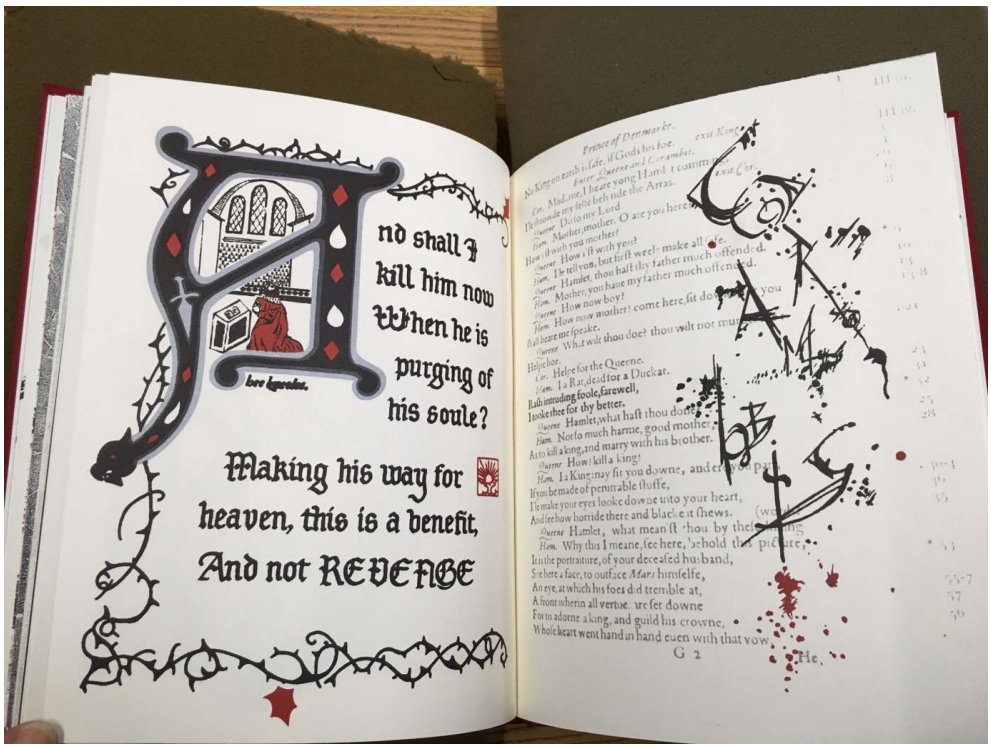

Fig. 4: Two-page spread from *The Bad Quarto*.

REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION OF VIRGINIA HUMANITIES.

23 Contrast, too, appears later in the volume in the facing-page juxtaposition of two different teams. The first page reproduces old type and offers a modern graphic of the drowning Ophelia, something like a shape poem. Wavy lines of changing thickness outline a woman's form; within her trunk appear these words: "twixt heaven / and earth, / clothes, / heavy / with drinke // Mermaide-like." The words describe the form of Ophelia that is pictured in the moment between her body's buoyancy and her clothes' natural absorption of the water. The relation between word and image is loosened here because the words already appear in the printed text above. The fluidity of the lines contrasts with the facing image of the brick wall, which appears top and bottom, framing the cheerfully cynical riddles of the two grave-diggers, printed in a clean version of the same type-face. Yet the pictures share one trait: they represent not the action but the subject of conversation, borrowing the imagery of the dialogue rather than the action of the play. They remain serial in nature, sharing a thematic resemblance but lacking any causal connection. Yet, to the knowing reader, a cause is implied in the dialogue: on the verso page the Queen describes Ophelia's death, and on the recto page facing it, the gravediggers prepare Ophelia's grave. The type, then, provides a narrative that strongly

implies a sequence of events, while the pictures weaken the sequence with ephemeral images momentarily evoked by the characters' speech [Figure 5].

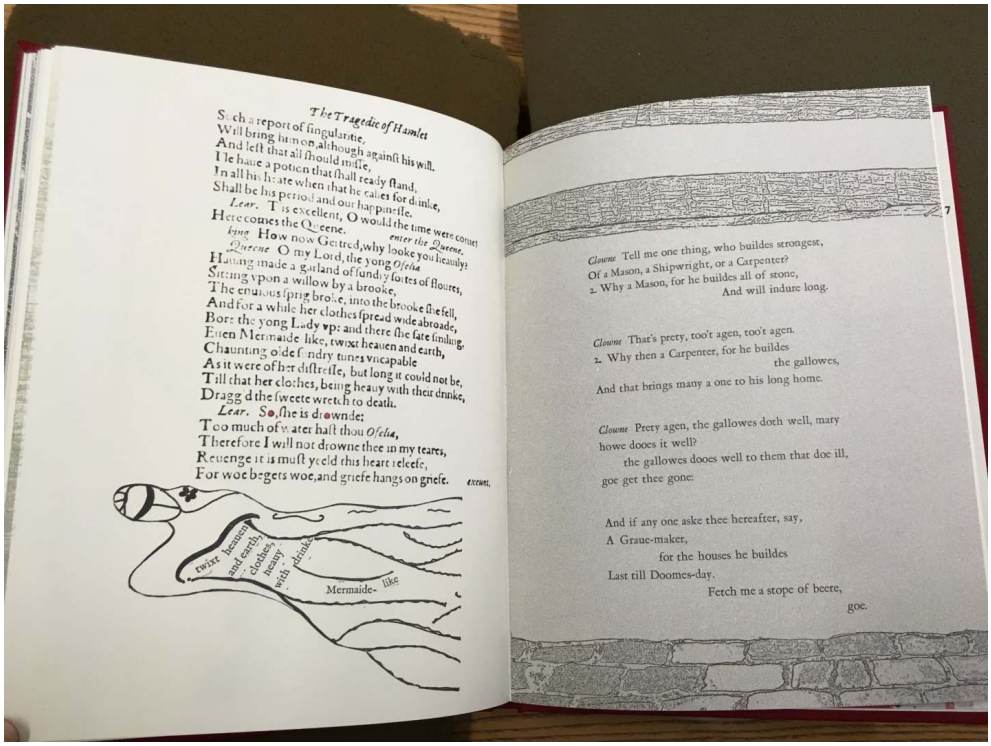

Fig. 5: Two-page spread from *The Bad Quarto*.

REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION OF VIRGINIA HUMANITIES.

24 The final spread of the *Quarto* brings together action and image again, representing dramatic elements both literal and figurative. The artists make clever use of chiaroscuro to represent an ornate goblet with red liquid spilling out of it, superimposed on an old typeface with the final words of 5.2. The cup conceals Horatio's lines, "No, I am more an antike Roman, / Then a Dane, here is some poison left" and Hamlet's reply:

> Vpon my loue I charge thee let it goe,
> O fie, Horatio, and if thou shouldst die,
> What a scandale wouldst thou leaue behind?
> What tongue should tell the story of our deaths,
> If not from thee?

25 The image of the cup performs the task that Hamlet gives Horatio—it "tell[s] the story of our deaths." Again in graphic terms, the image spills over, as the red stain flows out of the cup across the page to stain the recto page as well. Cutting across the stain and the nearby blotches are two clean white bands, forming the horizontal cross of the Danish flag. The red mark becomes both stain and flag, the blotches running up toward the last lines of print—Fortinbras's words, "Take vp the bodie, such a sight as this / Becomes the fieldes, but here doth much amisse." The stain represents both the death of Denmark and its restoration under Fortinbras, the page itself and the Danish state, bringing together the disorder of domestic revenge and Hamlet's combat against State treason and venality. The two-page spread is one large image representing sequential action—the revelation of the falling glass of poisoned wine, the blood of the combatants, and the wound to the State itself [Figure 6].

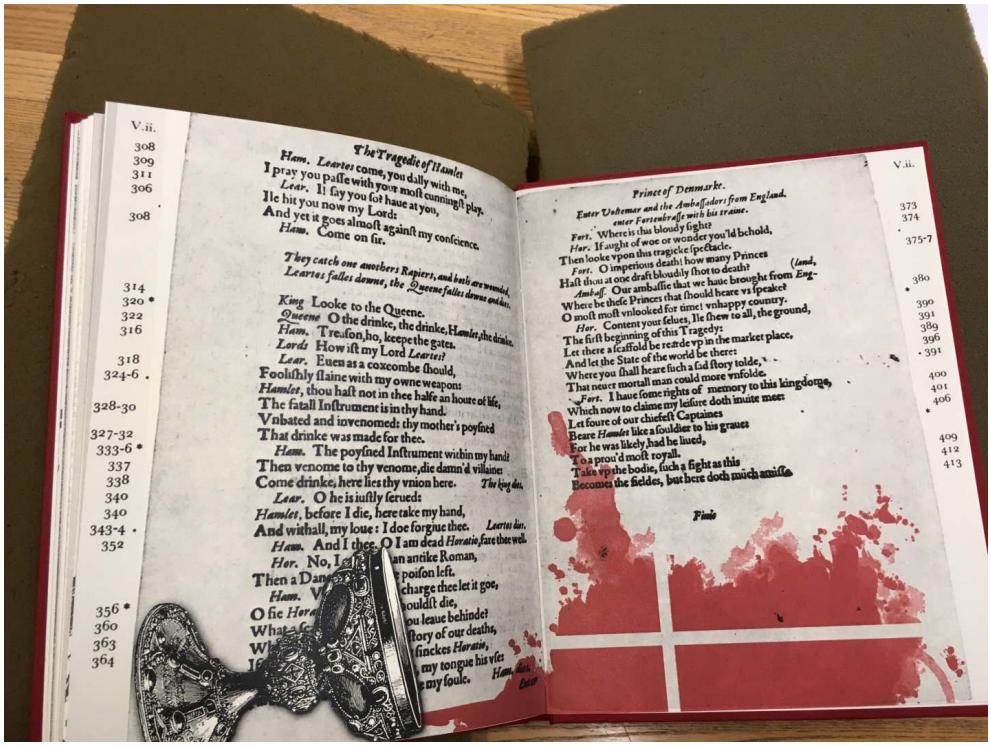

Fig. 6: Two-page spread from *The Bad Quarto*

REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION OF VIRGINIA HUMANITIES.

26 The collaborative project of *The Bad Quarto* is necessarily more likely to create a visual series than a sequence, and broader arcs are quite loosely structured. The VABC collective set up the volume as a set of discrete projects, consciously creating discontinuity among the signatures as an experiment in group work. The visuals counter the carefully knit story that we know, creating a rough equivalent to the faulty Q1. As the book's final page explains, "[e]arly scholars disdained this version as one of the 'stol'n and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by frauds and stealths of injurious impostors.'" The sense of the unexpected, of the tangential or incomplete, is featured in these enigmatic pages, which bring out subtextual *topoi* but offer only random gestures towards the forward motion of the dramatic arc. More is left out than included even in the printed text; often a word or phrase—or an image—represents an entire dialogue. Yet recurrent images loop back to earlier moments in the volume, gesturing toward the play's pervasive subjects: political surveillance, maneuvering, and violence.

27 The very value of sequence is interrogated in Arne Wolf's artist's book *Hamlet II:2*. This book is quite self-consciously a codex: a beautiful red cloth-bound package (a "drop-back box") longer than it is tall, its pages are hinged from a brass three-ring binder [Figure 7].

Fig. 7: Cover, *Hamlet II:2*.

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28 Each page contains just two letters printed from linoleum blocks, and all the pages are cut horizontally into three strips so that each third of the page can be turned independently. With only nine pages, the book contains eight two-page spreads, a front page, and a back page. Turning the strips to match one another, the result is this:
"TH / OU GH / TH IS / BE MA / DN ES / S,Y ET / TH ER / E'S ME / TH OD / IN' T"
(recognizable as the sentence uttered by Polonius at 2.2.205-206 in *Hamlet*: "Though this be madness, yet there's method in't"). However, turning the strips at random results in an almost infinite number of combinations, some involving random words or letter-combinations ("THUS," "THEB," "E'SME") and others creating typographical designs somewhat resembling the letters of our alphabet. Because of the graphic qualities of Wolf's typeface, a page offers aesthetic pleasure even when no real letter is recognizable [Figure 8].

Fig. 8: "THIS", *Hamlet II:2*.

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29 Smith discusses books with similar forms in his treatment of "accumulated fragments." He observes that turning the page
is a physical movement. Turning pages reveals the order of viewing.
It places the book into time.
The book is a single experience, a compound picture of the many separate sheets.
In the codex, this single experience is revealed in slivers. The total is perceived and exists only as retention of afterimage in the mind. The codex is never seen at once.[23]

Hamlet II:2 makes no sense if you do not read beyond the limits of the two-page spread. Its elegance and color arouse curiosity, however. One turns the strips to make sense of the nonsense—to discover the correct line-up and to deduce the message over the course of laborious reading. The reading experience turns up words within words that may add layers of meaning to the allusion.

30 The artifact is not merely a tribute to Shakespeare, of course: Wolf's removal of the sentence from its context un-anchors it from its original meaning and allows it to signify more freely.[24] Wolf seems to be overlooking the identity of the character who speaks the words, using *Hamlet* as a commentary on the meaning-making process of his own artifact. (There may be some *self*-mockery in apotheosizing the sentiments of a character generally viewed as wordy, pompous, and foolish.) The "method" is the random combinations of signs, only a single series of which results in the "right" combination of paper strips. But, as I have already noted, the combinations that fail to form letters are aesthetic creations in their own right. Wolf's elegant artwork recalls the typographic experimentation of the Bauhaus School, the Surrealists and, most of all, the Lettrists, a post-1945 avant-garde group who invented new glyphic writing forms. Their founder, the Franco-Romanian Isidore Isou, characterized the movement as "an interrogation of letterforms as the fundamental units of communication."[25] Followers of Isou like Maurice Lemaître used letters and glyph-like marks as graphic elements.[26] Lemaître hoped to create letters that were like rebuses or Chinese characters, letters that communicate ideas directly in an attempt to intensify the visual properties of writing.[27] In *Hamlet II:2*, Wolf is creating both a series, which moves forward towards a very focused, specific representation of an utterance, and a sequence, in which the page-turner can revel in the *meaning* of the utterance, the madness of applying exquisite corpse techniques to a typographical artwork. Wolf uses not primarily Polonius, but *Hamlet*'s word-games: the playful divisions among written matter that occur "between *whom*," as Hamlet obscurely inquires—whether as grounds for quarrel or as "wild and whirling words" with no apparent communicative intention. Wolf clearly chose *Hamlet* specifically for its thematic concern with the divide between the word and what it represents, the enactor of a deed versus the actor of the staged show, the world-making utterance and the potential in utterance for falsity. In his lectures as a professor, Wolf asserted, "Content equals the whole message, not just the verbal message."[28] *Hamlet II:2* makes typography a formal disruption of print's appearance of transparency. It problematizes the perception of print as the unmediated transmission of ideas. The book artist once explained in an interview that his liking for a piece of literature could become the springboard for his own creation, referring to "the urge for the visual extension of the verbal."[29] As he explains, "I don't

claim that whatever verbal fragment I chose indeed stands for the verbal whole—I only claim that *for me* it represents, it calls up, the whole, the idea of the whole, as a trigger, or as you put it, a springboard."[30] Wolf's work cuts out the plot of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* entirely and calls attention to its themes. Polonius's words become in Wolf's work a commentary on typography, just as they are a commentary about the deceptive potential of words in *Hamlet*.

31 Like purely visual books, *Hamlet II:2* is what Smith calls a one-picture book: "the total, not the individual drawings or photographs, is of major importance. Each page compounds time, memory, and specific images towards creating one compound concept."[31] The length of time it takes for Hamlet to conclude his investigation is paralleled with the reader's experience of turning the strips and laboriously making out their meaning. Memory, so crucial to Hamlet's process of grieving and his ability to come to terms with his father's fate, proves equally necessary to Wolf's reader, who needs to remember what has been turned and cast aside in order to comprehend the full message. Wolf's message is cumulative: one needs to remember what is no longer present to process the statement in its complete form.

32 Wolf's goals are different from those of the makers of *The Bad Quarto*, which in turn diverge from those of the creators of the Cranach Press *Hamlet*. Wolf uses a textual fragment to reflect on the creative nature of typographical artistry, whereas the makers of the Cranach Press *Hamlet* experiment with non-verbal storytelling. Yet there is one important commonality: while all these volumes are clearly homage to Shakespeare, the creators are also inserting themselves as makers. With these volumes, both High Modern and postmodern artists have used Shakespeare to challenge the forward motion of drama and narrative. They spur us to discard our perception of Shakespeare's works as texts and reconceive our books as material artifacts. The unusual decision to select J. Dover Wilson's edition of *Hamlet* as the text for the Cranach Press *Hamlet* and the inclusion of Wilson's notes in a separate booklet draw our attention to the complex textual history of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. But the volume also challenges our identification of "Hamlet" with Shakespeare: why not Saxo's *Hamlet*, or Belleforest's? As there is no authoritative version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, why should Shakespeare's authorship of a specific version of the story be privileged? Theories of the artist's book tend to privilege the originary version of a volume, and the original maker of an artist's book, but collaborative efforts in these areas recall recent scholarship on the necessarily collaborative nature of early modern printing and book production. I want to go beyond Maurizio Calbi's assertion that the "signature of the 'Thing "Shakespeare"' [...] cannot be clearly or absolutely separated from its afterlife."[32] My point is about attention to textuality as medium: it is time that we cease to treat the medium (book or otherwise) as transparent.

33 As a foundational author, Shakespeare offers book artists an immediate connection to the literary canon, something that workers in this relatively new and seemingly marginal art form might well crave. Book arts, however, offers a Modern *and* postmodern approach to discovering what is unique and valuable in Shakespeare's work beyond the language that avant-garde theater practitioners have criticized as sententious or deadening. If we would like to see Shakespeare's body of work evolving beyond its original purpose as a group of playscripts, we may best achieve our goal by reconsidering both the medium through which the play is transmitted and the active choices made by those who craft the material objects that we see as "Shakespeare's plays."

NOTES

1. See James McLaverty, *Pope, Print, and Meaning*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001. Claire M. L. Bourne, "Marking Shakespeare", *Shakespeare: The Journal of the British Shakespeare Association* 13.4, 2017, 367-386, and Claire M. L. Bourne, "Dramatic Pilcrows", *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 108.4, 2014, 413-452.

2. Stuart Sillars, *The Illustrated Shakespeare, 1709-1875*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 4.

3. Johanna Drucker, *The Century for Artists' Books*, New York, Granary, 1995, p. 3-4. See also the definitions of the book artist provided by Dick Higgins, Richard Kostelanetz, Ulises Carrión, Lucy R. Lippard, and Susi R. Bloch in Joan Lyons, ed., *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, Layton, UT, Gibbs M. Smith, 1985: Dick Higgins, "A Preface", p. 11-12; Richard Kostelanetz, "Book Art", p. 27-30; Ulises Carrión, "The New Art of Making Books", p. 31-43; Lucy R. Lippard, "The Artists' Book Goes Public", p. 45-48; and Susi R. Bloch, "The Book Stripped Bare", p. 133-147.

4. Drucker, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*

5. Keith A. Smith, *Structure of the Visual Book*, 4th ed., Rochester, NY, Keith Smith Books, 2003, p. 119.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

8. François Rigolot, "Le Poétique et l'analogique", *Poétique* 35, September, 1978, p. 258; qtd. and translated in Willard Bohn, *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry, 1914-1928*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 5.

9. Courtney Lehmann, "Introduction, 'What is a Film Adaptation?' Or 'Shakespeare Du Jour'", in Richard Burt, ed., *Shakespeares after Shakespeare: An Encyclopedia of the Bard in Mass Media and Popular Culture*, vol. 1, Westport and London, Greenwood Press, 2007, 74-80, p. 75.

10. Maurizio Calbi, *Spectral Shakespeares: Media Adaptations in the Twenty-First Century*, New York, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013, p. 19.

11. Printed Matter, Inc. Website. "What is an artist's book?": https://www.printedmatter.org/what-we-do/what-is-an-artists-book (last accessed 3 February 2017).

12. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

14. Bohn, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

15. Drucker, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

16. Stephen Orgel alludes to the 1457 Mainz Psalter. See Stephen Orgel, *Spectacular Performances: Essays on Theatre, Imagery, Books, and Selves in Early Modern England,* Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2011, p. 135, and Stephen Orgel, "The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58.3, Autumn, 2007, 290-310, p. 308. However, Sarah Werner cites L. M. Newman's collection of Kessler and Craig's correspondence as mentioning both the 1462 Bible and the 1472 *Decretum* as additional key texts for Johnson's inspiration. See Sarah Werner, blog post: "Kern your Enthusiasm (4)" in HiLoBrow, 4 August 2014: http://hilobrow.com/2014/08/04/kern-your-enthusiasm-4/ (last accessed 3 February 2017).

17. James P. Taylor, "The Shadow Puppets of Elsinore: Edward Gordon Craig and the Cranach Press *Hamlet*", *Theatre Design and Technology* 50.3, Summer, 2014, 40-55, p. 45.

18. Werner, *op. cit.* [No pagination.]

19. Experiments in typography were enacted by members of twentieth-century avant-garde movements such as Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism; perhaps the best-known is Guillaume Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* (1918).
20. All quotations from the Cranach Press *Hamlet* reference William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. J. Dover Wilson, Weimar, Germany, Cranach Press, 1930.
21. See Ephesians 5:22-24 and 5:31-33.
22. See http://virginiabookarts.org/2015/04/vabcs-bad-hamlet/ (last accessed 17 April 2018).
23. Smith, *op. cit.*, 94.
24. Barthes uses the term "anchorage" with reference to the textual component of the magazine ad, arguing that "the linguistic message," as he calls it, narrows down the multivalent signifiers of the image. See Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath, London, Harper, 1977, p. 38-40. I use the term somewhat differently here, suggesting that the con-text of *Hamlet* delimits the meaning of the statement, which Arne Wolf frees up for his own purposes. It would be interesting, however, to consider the words of Wolf's artwork as both text and image with reference to Barthes' concept of "anchorage." In Barthes' own words, "The connotators do not fill the whole of the lexia, reading them does not exhaust it" (p. 50).
25. Drucker, *op. cit.*, p. 228.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, p. 229-230.
28. Qtd. in Thomas Ingmire, "Remembering Arne Wolf" (http://www.thomasingmire.com/blog/remembering-arne-wolf, 28 October 2014, last accessed 4 December 2018).
29. John Prestianni, "Words and Images: An Interview with Arne Wolf", *Alphabet: The Journal of the Friends of Calligraphy* 10.1, Winter, 1985, 16-26; p. 25.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Smith, *op. cit.*, 130.
32. Calbi, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

ABSTRACTS

Harry Graf Kessler's *Hamlet* (1930), Arne Wolf's *Hamlet II:2* (1991), and the collaborative work *The Bad Quarto* (2015) use *Hamlet* to explore the possibilities of the artist's book. In these works, a "Shakespeare text" functions as a tool for artistic experimentation. The resulting postmodern bricolage has implications for both the literary canon and the art form it represents. The artist's book, linked with a well-known name, becomes something of an insouciant challenge to canonicity, while the presence of Shakespearean text lends legitimacy to the work. Spatial play and materiality forge the text and redefine what "text" is, and the use of Shakespeare in the artist's book brings new meaning and vigor to our concept of "Shakespeare". Concern with sequencing and correlation looms large in these works as well. The artists who create these works challenge the codex's privileging of series: the forward movement of the series yields to the multivalent pleasures of sequence. White space becomes a visual silence that privileges the space in which text and images appear. The results are new forms of *Hamlet* that change our perception of Shakespeare's version of the story.

Hamlet de Harry Graf Kessler (1930), *Hamlet II:2* (1991) et l'œuvre collaborative *The Bad Quarto* (2015) utilisent Hamlet pour explorer les possibilités qu'offre le livre d'artiste. Un « texte

shakespearien » y sert d'outil à l'expérimentation artistique. Le bricolage postmoderne qui en résulte a des conséquences à la fois sur le canon littéraire et sur la forme artistique qu'il représente. Le livre d'artiste, raccroché à un nom connu, devient un défi insouciant lancé à la canonicité, alors même que la présence du texte de Shakespeare donne de la légitimité à l'œuvre produite. Les jeux sur l'espace et la matérialité construisent le texte et redéfinissent ce qu'est un « texte », tandis que l'utilisation de Shakespeare dans le livre d'artiste revivifie notre concept de ce qu'est « Shakespeare ». Ces productions font également émerger des enjeux de sérialité et de corrélation. Les artistes qui créent ces œuvres remettent en cause la série privilégiée par le codex : le mouvement vers l'avant de la série laisse la place aux plaisirs multivalents de la séquence. Il en résulte de nouvelles formes de *Hamlet* qui modifient notre perception de la version de l'histoire élaborée par Shakespeare.

INDEX

Keywords: artist's book, bad Quarto, coherence, collaboration, Craig Edward Gordon, Cranach Press, Hamlet, Quarto, spatialization, text, typography
Mots-clés: cohérence, collaboration, Craig Edward Gordon, Cranach Press, Hamlet, in-quarto, livre d'artiste, « mauvais quarto », spatialisation, texte, typographie

AUTHOR

JENNIFER A. LOW

Florida Atlantic University